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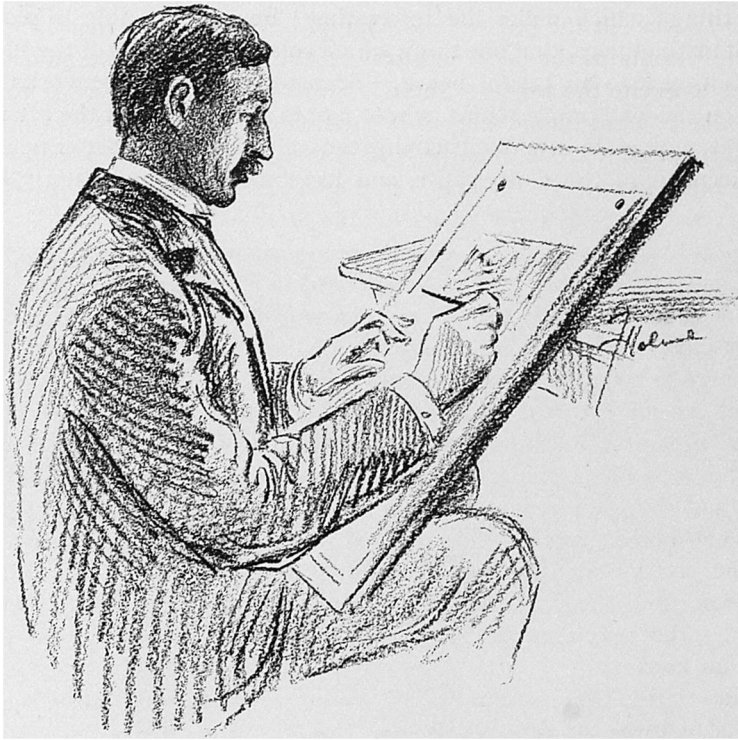
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PORTRAIT OF WILLIAM SCHMEDTGEN.

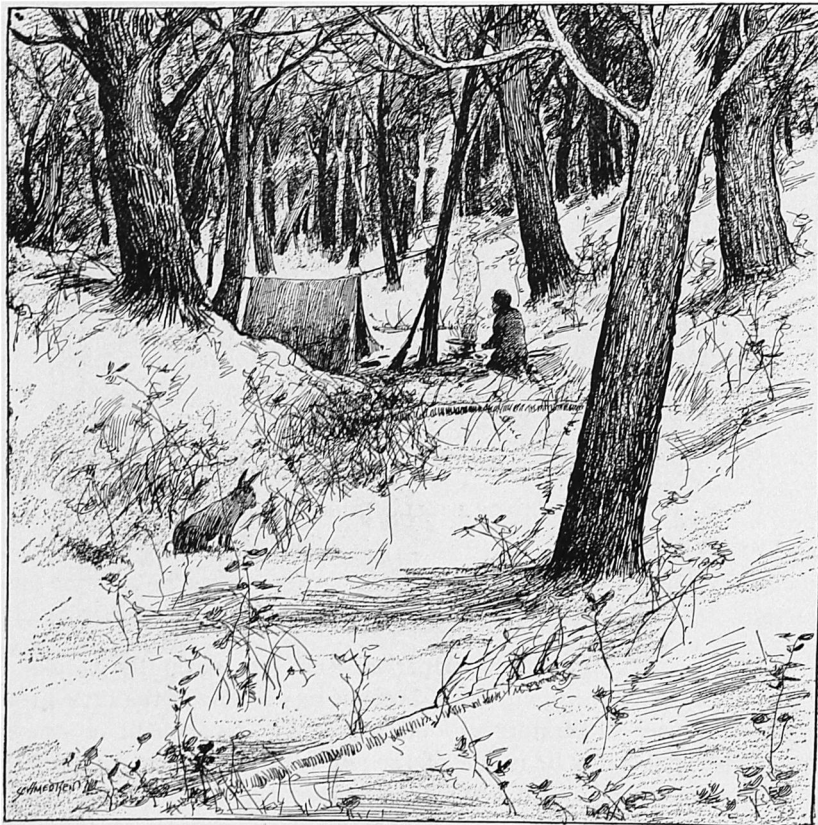
Drawn by Frank Holme.

WILLIAM SCHMEDTGEN.

WHEN speaking of newspaper artists, one naturally thinks of William Schmedtgen. Not because he was one of the little group of pioneer illustrators who started a new department in a newspaper, or because today he is one of the few who are at the "top of the heap," but because he is a typical newspaper artist. This assertion is made advisedly and with the confidence which is born of seven years' working fellowship with Schmedtgen and all of the best known of Chicago's newspaper artists.

Because a man writes well it does not follow that he will make a good newspaper reporter. Because a man paints, colors, draws and sketches well, it does not follow that he will make a success as a newspaper artist. The reporter must have that something which, for want of a better name, passes as "the nose for news"; and the successful newspaper artist also must possess that fanciful feature—that is, he must be quick to grasp those

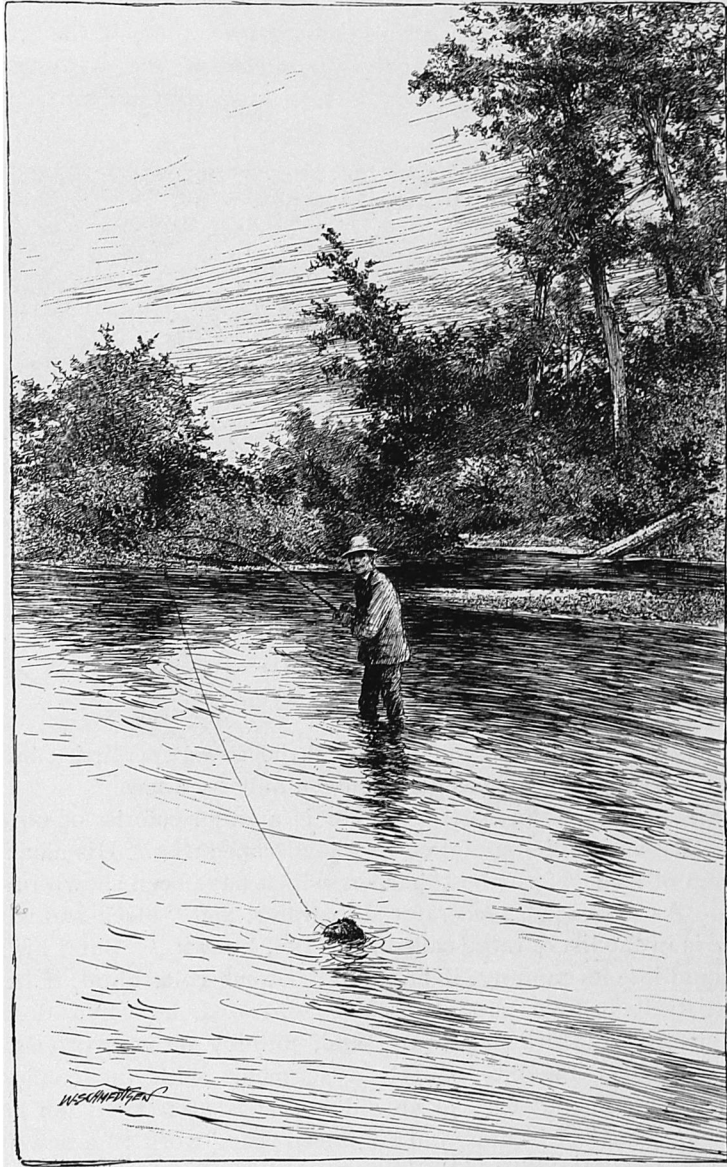
little things which make life interesting ; he must be able to pick out, almost instinctively, that one thing which contains the news of the moment and transfer it to his bristol board. Scores of artists whose works today hang on the walls of art rooms, whose names are familiar in the art world, have attempted to use their God-given talents to the betterment and advancement of the daily paper, and have miserably and utterly failed.



"WINTER," BY WILLIAM SCHMEDITGEN.

Courtesy the *Current Magazine*.

Any newspaper reporter who has gone out on an "assignment" with such an artist knows the reason of the failure. It was the entire absence of that peculiar faculty which gives the successful newspaper artist the ability to combine the artistic and picturesque with the practical ; to weld the pictorial art with the story-telling talent. That is all there is to mark



TROUT CREEK, LOUISIANA, BY WILLIAM SCHMIDTGEN.



A SUMMER LANDSCAPE, BY WILLIAM SCHMEDTGEN.

Reproduced from BRUSH AND PENCIL, December, 1897.

the difference between the studio artist and the newspaper artist, but it is a difference so wide that it has been bridged only by a few.

Take Schmedtgen, for instance. He is a water-colorist of no mean repute. He has a wide reputation as a landscape artist. His name is at the bottom of some of the best marines which have been shown in local exhibits. As a designer, decorator, illustrator, and "black-and white" artist, he is in the list of those called the "best known." But if his right hand should lose its cunning, if he should become color-blind, if he and the "artistic" instinct should become separated, he could drop his brushes, pencils and drawing board, and, pinning on a reporter's star, go out and cover the city editor's assignments with the confidence, nonchalance and mental ease of an old experienced reporter, for he has the newspaper instinct in him, and his fifteen years' work on a newspaper has developed it to the "expert's" degree.

This combination is not unique to Schmedtgen. It is possessed to a greater or lesser degree by every member of the "craft." It is safe to

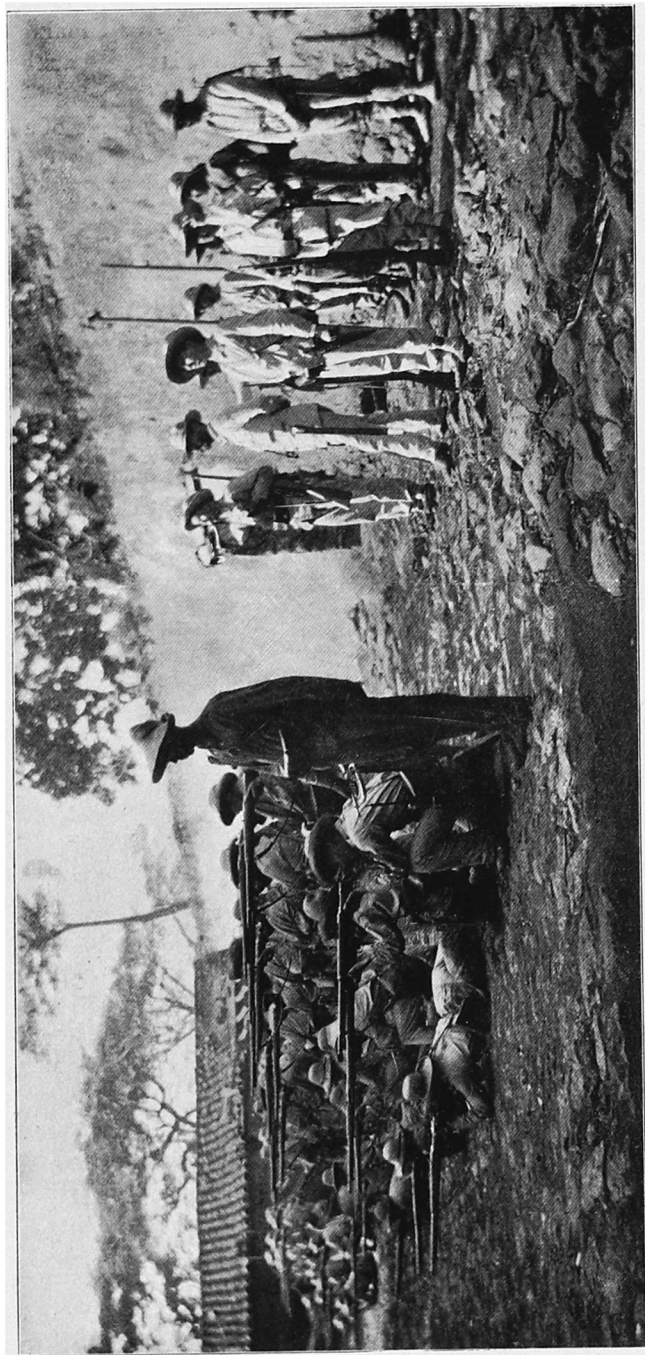
say that the successful working newspaper artist will make a good all-round newspaper reporter, and the reporter is the backbone of the newspaper.

Schmedtgen has done much to make the pictorial side of a daily paper



"SHOT AT SUNRISE," BY WILLIAM SCHMEDTGEN.

what it is today. When he and Olsen, some fifteen years ago, sketched those Board of Trade men, making the originals of the woodcuts which appeared in the old Chicago *Mail*, the first pictures to "run" in a Chicago



A CUBAN WAR PHOTOGRAPH, TAKEN BY WILLIAM SCHMIEDTGEN.

Courtesy *The Inland Printer*



AN OLD GATE, BY WILLIAM SCHMEDTGEN.

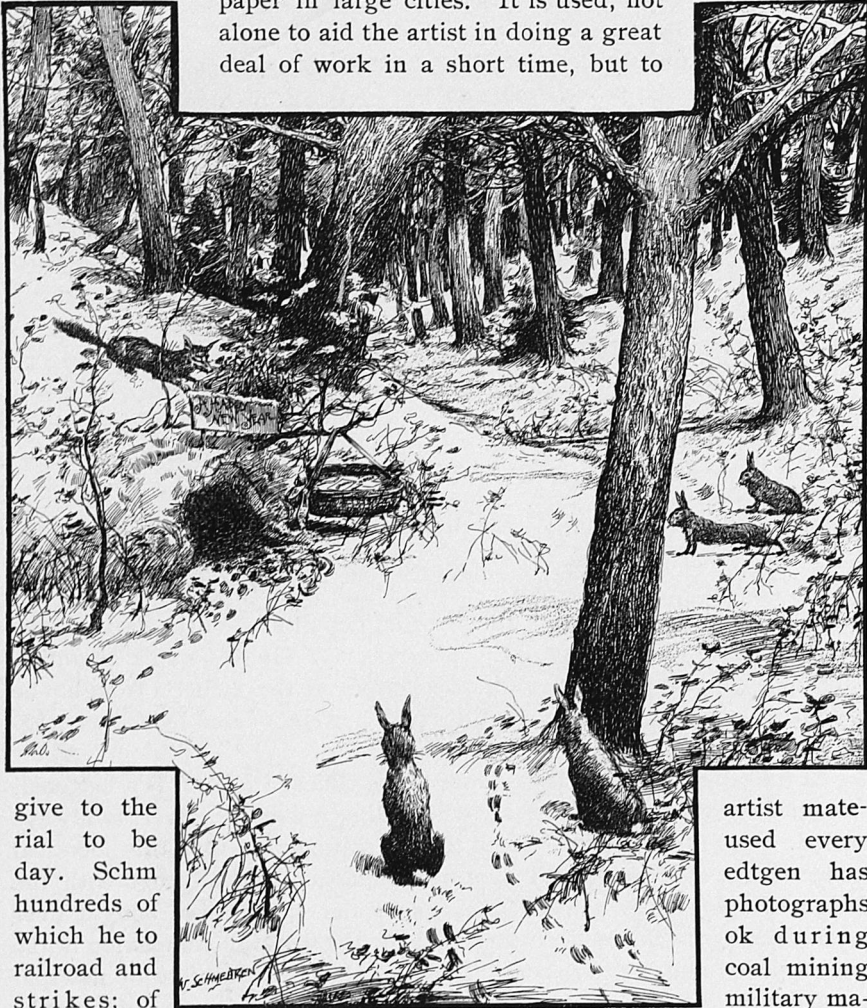
newspaper, he became one of the pioneer newspaper artists. From that day he has been an active, prominent and dominant member of the fraternity. Through the stages — wood cuts, chalk plates and zinc etchings — which marked the progress of the pictorial department of the daily paper, he has been numbered among the progressive. He was quick to anticipate the possibilities which lie in the bottom of the etcher's trough ; he instantly embraced the opportunities which were offered by the photographer's camera.

At his elbow, in the artists' room of the *Chicago Record*, is a battered, scratched, travel-marked camera, which, like a good revolver, is always loaded. Careful inquiry disclosed the interesting fact that this identical camera is the first purchased by a newspaper artist in Chicago with the design of using it as a tool. This particular camera was bought over seven years ago. Before the camera became the working companion of the artist's pencil and drawing board, photographs had been used by newspaper artists as they are now, but the artists' prejudice against photographs was strong ; they had an idea that silver prints were not "legitimate."

Schmedtgen, on the contrary, held that it was the part of the newspaper artist to present the news in one or more pictures with the same fidelity to details and composition as the reporter did in his "story." He argued that newspaper readers wanted photographic clearness and

details, and he pointed to the rapid rise of the half-tone process used by magazines and weekly papers as an indication that the public was quick to appreciate the mechanical accuracy of the camera and sensitive plate.

That he was right then is proved by the fact that the camera today is an essential part of the equipment of the art department of every newspaper in large cities. It is used, not alone to aid the artist in doing a great deal of work in a short time, but to



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["A HAPPY NEW YEAR," BY WM. SCHMEDITGEN.]

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buildings (to be used in case fire destroys one of them); police officers on and off duty; firemen at work and play; street jams; river scenes; horse and bicycle racing; golf, tennis, baseball, football and cricket players in

action; railroad scenes; crowds around convention halls in a dozen different cities, etc. But the gem of his collection is the group of pictures he took in Cuba two years ago. Accompanied only by a guide, he took his camera and sketchbook far into the country, miles away from Havana, along the "trocha," and returned with a roll of film which proved that he had been with insurgents, pacificos, Spanish soldiers, and the roving bands of the unattached.

All of these pictures "came in handy" when he returned to Chicago, and that single trip proved, beyond any question of doubt, that in the right hands, the little camera is of the greatest importance to newspaper artists.

Mr. Schmedtgen has been at the head of the art department of the *Chicago Record* for twelve years, beginning when the *Evening News* and the *Morning News* had but one department. His work is so well known that a "cut" in the paper scarcely needs his signature to name the artist. He is an ardent hunter and fisherman, and his sketchbook is as much a part of his kit as is his book of flies, or case of shells. He is happiest when sketching landscapes; water views, thick growths of underbrush with a few trees in the foreground; a bit of water between wooded banks; wild rice patches in swamps; and a camp fire cutting cameos against the black background of deep woods. But the daily grind of the newspaper artist gives him little opportunity for displaying his love of the wild and uncultivated in nature. However, he derives much satisfaction from crowds in convention halls, the smoke and picturesque confusion at fires; and the common everyday life in Chicago's congested streets. He is a typical newspaper artist because he seeks to get the news features first, driving straight for the center of activity and interest through any difficulties or embarrassments which may come up, but never returning to his desk without catching whatever there is in his "assignment" which is picturesque and artistic.

MALCOLM McDOWELL.

